



**SAFE HAVEN**  
No-Kill Shelter For Cats

# The Scratching Post

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*Comments on the Scratching Post? Send ideas and suggestions to [cbiond@nc.rr.com](mailto:cbiond@nc.rr.com).*

## All About Volunteers

### *Sixth Tuxedo Cat Ball!*

Planning for this year's Tuxedo Cat Ball is in full swing. As many of you know, the TCB is SAFE Haven's largest single fund-raising event of the year.

This year the proceeds from the ball are especially important, with the economy driving a higher than normal number of returns and abandonments.

Support from our volunteers is critical for this event to be a success. . Right now we have two pressing needs:

1. Individuals to help the auction committee solicit and transport items for this year's auction. If you are willing to help with this effort, please contact Doug at [deader@nc.rr.com](mailto:deader@nc.rr.com).
2. Individuals with event planning expertise or interest to help with the overall planning.

If you can help, please contact Pam or Sherri at the shelter.

### *Company Grants*

Inez Leyden wants to urge SHFC volunteers to check with their employers to see if the company has any grants available for charities its employees support.

Inez works for Glaxo Smith Kline, which has a program called GIVE. GSK will donate \$500 to an organization where a GSK employee volunteers 50+ hours annually.

Inez and Suzanne Caso (also a GSK employee) applied for the grants and received them!

If you're a GSK employee, Inez would be happy to provide more details about their GIVE program. She also encourages all volunteers to speak to your human resources departments to find out if your company has a similar program.

### *Wag Adoption Events*

SHFC will be holding adoption events at Wag Pet Boutique each month. The events are normally from 11 to 3, and give us a great opportunity to show some adoptable cats and provide information on SAFE Haven and SAFE Care to the public.

If you're interested in supporting an adoption counselor at one of these events, contact Sherri at the shelter. Upcoming dates are Jan. 23, Feb. 27, Mar. 13, and Apr. 24.

### *NOFO At the Pig*

On Tuesday, Feb. 9, NOFO at the Pig (2014 Farview Road, Raleigh NC 27608 – [www.nofocom.com](http://www.nofocom.com)) will donate 10% of its proceeds to SAFE Haven. Visit with a friend or two for a great dinner between 5:30 and 9 pm. Whatever you spend benefits the shelter!

## Volunteers Extraordinaire!

We continue to recognize volunteers who've been part of the SAFE Haven for Cats family for many years. Here are volunteers who started in 2004 and who are still contributing to the SAFE Haven mission.

*Pam Conary  
Beverly Orozco  
Joanie Aitken  
Sherry Johnson  
Barbara Mason  
Laurel Clayton  
Janelle DiFranco  
Tammy Casiere  
Mary McCulley*

Thank you all for your years of dedication and service!

Save the Date!  
Sixth Annual  
*Tuxedo Cat Ball*  
at  
*Marbles Kids  
Museum!*  
April 16, 2010

# Trap-Neuter-Release: Another Option for Feral Cats

By Irena Smith

*Irena and James Smith, SHFC volunteers, talk about how the feral colony in their neighborhood is managed based on TNR principles.*

We are the official crazy cat people of the neighborhood – the ones who catch, spay/neuter and feed cats that don't even belong to us. How did we start down this road?

At a neighborhood pot luck dinner a neighbor, knowing that I have a pet-sitting business, asked us what could be done about the litters of kittens being born under neighborhood decks each year. We all agreed that the cats needed to be trapped and neutered, to prevent more cats next year.

Over a period of about three months we caught and sterilized 10 cats. These cats were all truly feral – wild animals, very frightened of people. They do NOT want to be someone's pet cat, and find contact with people unbearable.

We decided that we needed to take responsibility for these feral cats, and investigated TNR (trap-neuter-release). The first step in the TNR process is trapping all the cats in the colony.

Setting up the traps is easy. We line a trap with newspapers and put some



*Shelters help the ferals stay warm in the winter.*

irresistible food inside (canned tuna or mackerel usually). We cover the trap with a tarp, so that if we trap a cat, it will feel hidden and more secure.

It is very important to check on the trap every hour or so. The weather is cold and being in a trap stresses the cat, so you want to collect it as soon as possible to prevent injury to the cat. If you catch a creature other than a feral cat, you will want to release it quickly and set the trap again. Also, if you trap a cat that's already been spayed or neutered, you'll want to release it. It's easy to tell if one of the cats has been caught and neutered previously, because the cat's left ear is notched when he's neutered.

After trapping the cat, we put the trap with the cat inside in our garage overnight. To keep the feral cat warm, we put the trap on an old piece of carpet and cover it with a blanket.

We have a standing appointment with the SAFE Care clinic to neuter cats from our colony, so we set our traps the evening before the appointment. Normally we bring the cat in in the morning and pick her up at the end of the day. In addition to being spayed or neutered, the clinic vaccinates the cat.

To make sure the cat is fully recovered before being released, we set up a dog crate in our spare bathroom. We put the carrier with the cat inside the crate, with the door facing away from the crate door. We then open the door to the carrier. We set out food, water and a litterbox inside the crate.

Most of the ferals will willingly eat and drink when we are out of the room, but some refuse to eat and we must let them go in a day, rather than keeping them for several days.

Normally the feral cat will return to the carrier when we enter the room, so it's not hard to close the carrier door and

take him out to be released where we caught him.

After the cat recovers, we release him. By releasing the sterilized and vaccinated feral cat back into the environment, it allows that cat to live its life the way that it wants to. It prevents overpopulation by preventing additional litters, which means a healthier life for the existing cats. The cat population stabilizes, and the managed feral cat colony will maintain the area as their group home. Because of the constant food supply and sterilization, they are less territorial and do not fight and injure each other.

Even though the cats are still exposed to danger from predators such as raccoons and foxes, these cats are truly wild animals and would never be happy in a home. Keeping them outside in a managed feral cat colony is so much preferable to the alternative – in Durham County (for example) about 300 cats are euthanized every month, 85% of them feral.

If you decide that you need a Trap Neuter Release program in your neighborhood, make sure that you talk to your neighbors. You wouldn't want the Neighborhood Watch calling the police when you walk in the brush behind your neighbor's house. Most people are concerned about the cats and agree that managing a colony this way is a good idea when it's explained to them.

The rewards for managing a colony with TNR are many. Every few nights we serve some delicious wet food under our car in the driveway, and we use a night vision camera connected to our TV to watch the show as we sit in our bonus room. It's amazing to see these beautiful creatures enjoying the food, sometimes coming to the containers in groups of two or three. I assure you, it's far more rewarding than watching American Idol!

## ASK THE VET ... *About Feline Obesity*

by Betsy Pethick, D.V.M.

### **Fat Cats Everywhere! What can we do about Feline Obesity?**

Believe it or not, obesity is the number one nutritional disorder in pets in the western world. Twenty-five percent of cats seen by veterinarians in the United States are overweight or obese. Cats are no different from the rest of us, in that over-consumption of calories ends up as excessive body fat.

Obesity is a risk factor for a variety of illnesses such as diabetes mellitus, hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver disease), osteoarthritis, and lower urinary tract disease. It can also lead to anesthetic complications, breathing disorders, skin problems, and impaired immune function.

Interestingly, mixed breed cats tend to be at higher risk for becoming overweight than purebreds. This may be genetic, but husbandry and greater awareness of the nutritional needs of cats may play a role.

Because we confine cats indoors, feed them a highly palatable, calorie dense diet which they do not have to work for, and often leave them alone for many hours a day, our cats are prone to consuming too many calories. And, to

add to the obesity problem, neutering has been shown to reduce the energy requirements of cats by 20 to 25%.

So, what can we do to help get our cats to lose weight or, better yet, avoid obesity?

First, start by assessing your cat's current condition. Cats reach their adult weight by about 12 months of age. This weight can be used as a guide to determine if your cat has become too heavy. Also, your veterinarian has probably been assessing your cat's body condition score, or BCS, at the time of his/her annual physical exam. This score will tell you if your cat has a

weight problem.

If your cat is overweight, then it's time to change the way you feed your cat.

Simply feeding less of a normal diet is generally not recommended. Not only will your cat be unhappy and feel hungry, but his nutritional balance may be compromised.

In cats, meeting protein needs, as well as energy needs, induces satiety. During weight loss, feeding a protein rich/ fat-restricted diet will help protect against loss of lean muscle mass while reducing caloric intake. Your veterinarian can advise you on which food (and what amount) is best for your cat.

## **Fostering Matters!**

by Sue Minns

*Sue Minns was between jobs and agreed to foster Starshine, a cat who loved other cats but would not allow potential adopters to touch her. Here's what Sue has to say about the fostering experience.*

When Starshine first emerged from the carrier into her new temporary home, a sunroom with cat trees, scatchers, and multiple cat beds (I have been known to love buying cat beds), she crept so low that she almost blended into the floor. She seemed so terrified that I was surprised that she did not immediately hide for a few days. But she didn't – brave girl! It seemed to me that she was really just afraid of

me and needed time to know I could be trusted and was nice to be around.

I soon learned that she did not like wet food or cat treats, but she did like daBird, catnip, a soft furry wand toy, the laser pointer, and Friskies Hairball Control hard treats (good since she is a medium-haired kitty). Each day we'd play together and listen to classical music, and I resisted reaching for her.

Soon she was coming to me to get her cheeks scratched and her back rubbed. Within a week she was allowing me to pet her all over and within 10 days, she was actively seeking out the attention of my outstretched arm. At the end of a month, she would come to me as *(continued on page 4)*



*Beautiful Starshine, looking content*



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## Spotlight On...

**Tina Joyner**  
**Sunday Morning Co-Cleaning**  
**Captain**



*Tina alternates cleaning captain duties during the Sunday morning cleaning shift.*

Tina admits she has a problem saying 'no' where animals are concerned. That's probably why she and her husband Alan are now living with seven cats and two dogs.

In some ways, this gives Tina slightly different motivation than a lot of SHFC volunteers. She says that she doesn't want to hang out with the cats after cleaning, because she knows that she'll bond with them and then feel terrible about not adopting them. Her favorite part of her volunteer shift is when the cats are all fed and clean and happy, and she can feel good about making their lives a little easier in their temporary home without having to take them all to her house.

Tina started volunteering in January of 2006, after a layoff. She had an opportunity to take a few months off, but after a month of doing nothing, decided it was time to make a contribution. She's always loved

animals, and she came to SAFE Haven's volunteer orientation and joined the Sunday morning cleaning crew.

After about a year and a half she was asked if she'd like to share cleaning captain duties on her Sunday morning shift. Her major duties as cleaning captain are being aware of what needs to be done, making sure supplies are available, and helping the new volunteers get oriented and productive. Although she doesn't consider herself a natural leader, she believes that anyone who's been around for a year and who's responsible can be a cleaning captain, and she wants to encourage other volunteers to consider doing it.

None of Tina's cats have come from SHFC – they're mostly strays to whom she couldn't say no. Their family started when she and Alan were coming home from a house-hunting trip. They noticed two bedraggled kittens in the middle of the road, with no house in sight. They carried them home and cleaned them up, and the kittens became the first of the crew.

After they moved into their new house, a female stray showed up. She didn't trust them at first, but occasionally started coming in the house to be with them. She got pregnant, and one night

when she decided she wanted to be in the house, Tina and her husband woke up to the sound of kitten squeals. The stray Momma had started to give birth on their bed.

A while later another stray showed up and decided to stay. Then a friend found a bunch of stray black kittens, and Alan, who'd always wanted a black cat, suggested taking one of those. It's no wonder Tina's afraid to get too close to the SHFC kitties!

Their momma cat was actually the reason they ended up with two dogs. When they took her to get her spayed, they saw a sign on the bulletin board that reminded them of their situation with the momma, except that the result was puppies and not kittens. They'd talked about getting a dog, but when they saw the puppies they couldn't decide on just one and ended up with two.

Tina asked if she could remind you all to ask your employers and the owners of companies you patronize if they have any grant or charitable programs that support community organizations. She works for Car Quest, and they have a charitable foundation that gave SHFC a \$1,000 grant last year and another \$500 grant this year!

## Fostering Matters!

*(continued from page 3)*

soon as I started opening the door and then seek out my touch.

One of my "semi-friendly" cats even visited with her on a few occasions and while my cat would nervously hiss at her, Starshine came up to him to sniff him all over and offer her friendship. It was easy to see how much she loved other cats because my cats are not all that friendly and Starshine only showed curiosity and friendliness toward them.

The opportunity to foster this brave, sweet, initially cautious kitty who demonstrated her ability to quickly develop trust towards this human has touched my heart and I am very grateful.

*This story has a wonderful ending. Even though Starshine was not as trusting in the shelter as she was with Sue, an adopter heard about how she progressed so well in a home and decided to adopt her!*

*If you're interested in being a foster Mom (or Pop) to one of our adult cats that needs some time away from the shelter, contact Sherri at [info@safehavenforcats.org](mailto:info@safehavenforcats.org). You'll make such a difference in a cat's life!*

### Holiday Gift Wrapping Wrap-up

This year's holiday gift wrapping effort netted almost \$3000 for the cats! 66 volunteers participated for a total of 139.5 hours at 8 stores over 13 days. Great job!